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MAY
No. 23DARK MYSTERIES 10¢APPROVED
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COMICS
CODE

AUTHORITY

THE SPIRITS
PREDICT A WONDERFUL
FUTURE FOR YOU --
I SEE ROMANCE, WEALTH,
TRAVEL. ALL IS ...
HEY - WHAT'S GOING
ON BACK THERE ???

YOU'RE A
FAKE!
MY BOY FRIEND
SAID HE WOULD
EXPOSE YOU!

AND HERE IS HIS
CONFEDERATE WITH HIS
PHONEY DISGUISES. I'M
GOING TO PUT BOTH OF
THEM OUT OF BUSINESS.

THE BAFFLING TALE OF A FEUD SPANNING THE CENTURIES...
"The MARDENBURG CURSE"

WEB COMIC UNIVERSE.COM



12¢

No. 15

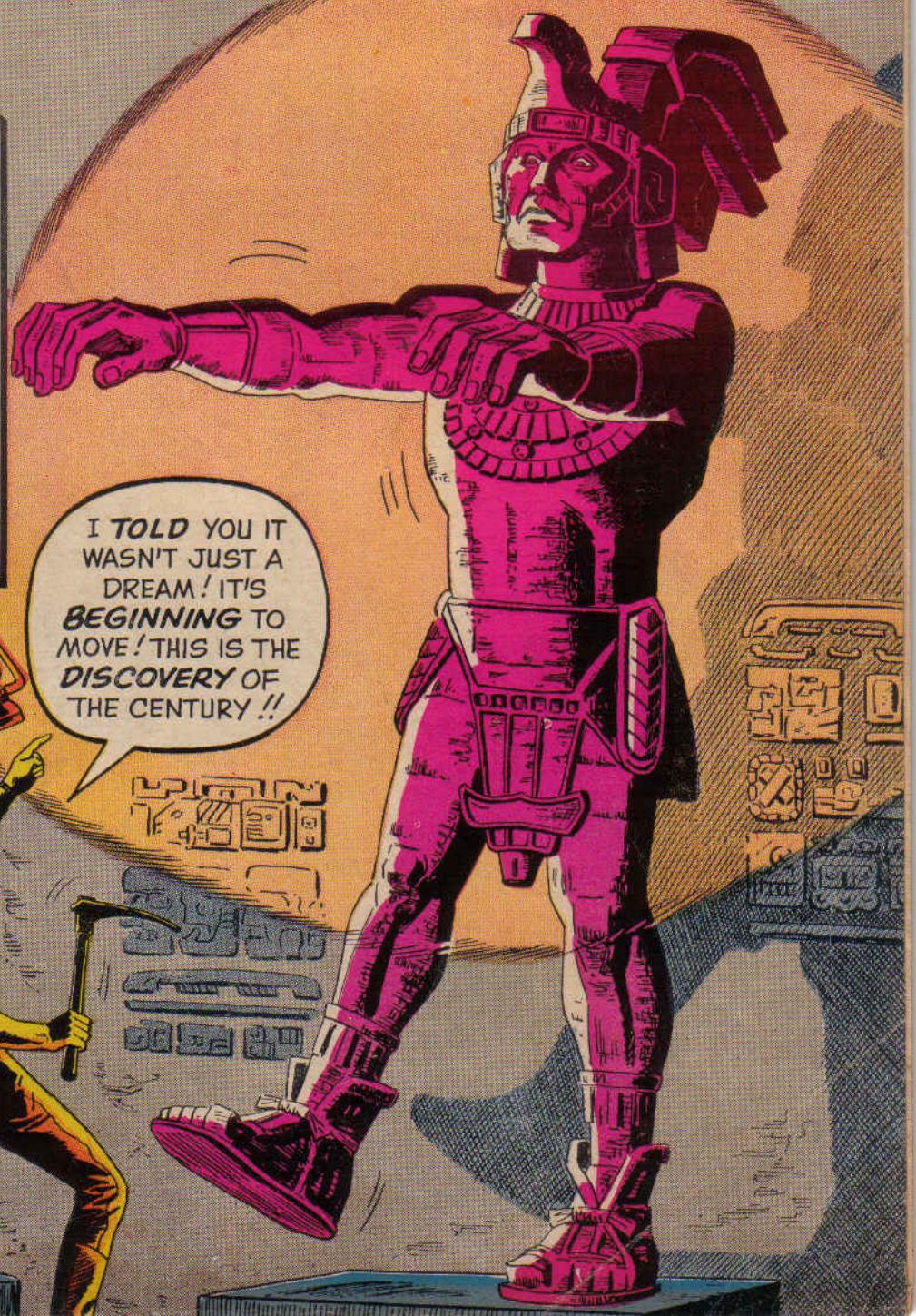
STRANGE MYSTERIES



DR. MARTIN PEALE, AN AVID STUDENT OF THE PAST, HAD MADE A FANTASTIC DISCOVERY...ONE THE WHOLE WORLD WOULD NOT BELIEVE! BUT IT WAS TRUE, AS YOU WILL FIND OUT AS YOU READ...

"Don't Box Me In!"

I TOLD YOU IT
WASN'T JUST A
DREAM! IT'S
BEGINNING TO
MOVE! THIS IS THE
DISCOVERY OF
THE CENTURY !!



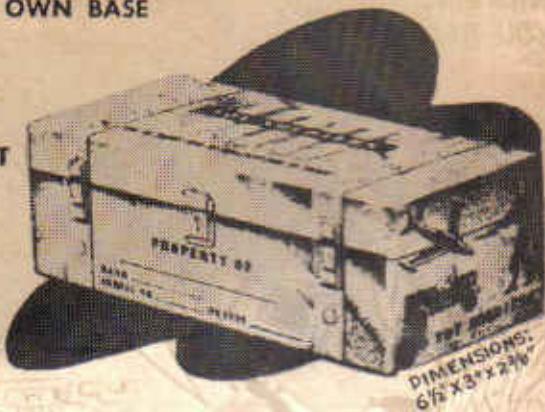
100 PC. Toy Soldiers \$1.25



**100 TOY SOLDIERS, MADE OF DURABLE PLASTIC
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EACH FOOTLOCKER CONTAINS:

4 Tanks	8 Officers
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4 Cruisers	4 Bombers
4 Sailors	4 Trucks
4 Riflemen	8 Jet Planes
8 Machinegunners	8 Cannon
8 Sharpshooters	4 Bazookamen
4 Infantrymen	4 Marksmen

100 TOY SOLDIERS, Dept I

62 West 47th Street Room 206

New York 36, N. Y.

HERE'S MY \$1.25!

NO C.O.D.'s

Rush the TOY SOLDIERS TO ME!

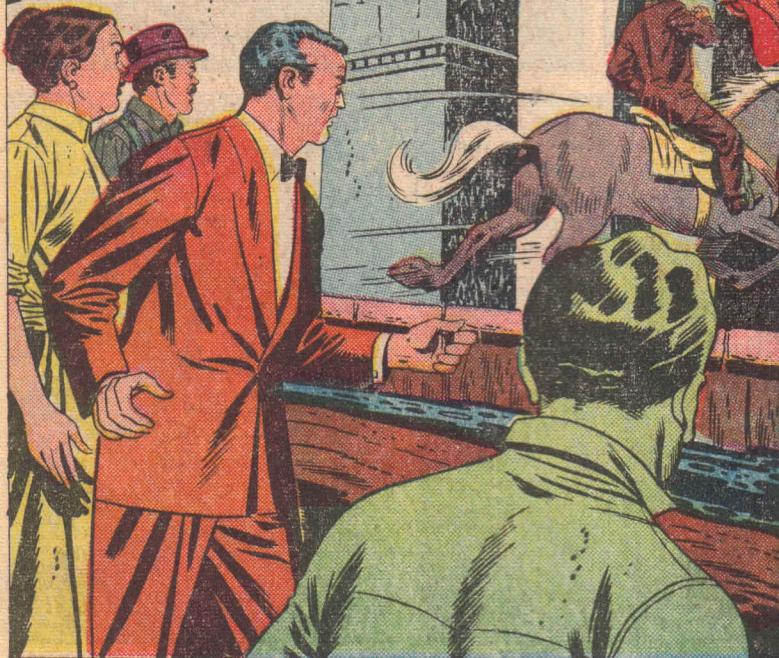
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THE MARDENBURG CURSE



FOR TEN GENERATIONS THE VON FELSENWEIR FAMILY HAD LAIN UNDER A POWERFUL AND EVIL CURSE. ONE BY ONE THE PROUD AND ARROGANT BARONS WHO LED THE CLAN MET STRANGE AND FEARFUL ENDS. NOW WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO FREDERICK, TENTH AND LAST BARON VON FELSENWEIR?

OUR STORY BEGINS OVER SIX HUNDRED YEARS AGO IN THE WILD MOUNTAINS OF CARPATHIA.

NOW, VON MARDENBURG, YOU DIE!

AH, VON FELSENWEIR, DO YOU REALLY WISH MY HORSE SO BADLY THAT YOU WOULD KILL ME FOR IT?



I WOULD EVEN DEFY THE DEVIL HIMSELF TO GET WHAT I WANT!

THIS EVIL DEED WILL DO YOU NO GOOD!



VON FELSENWEIR, FOR THIS EVIL DEED YOU, AND ALL WHO FOLLOW YOU FOR TEN GENERATIONS, SHALL MEET WITH MADNESS AND DEATH. THIS IS MY CURSE ON YOU AND YOUR FAMILY...

WHAT?... YOU DO NOT FRIGHTEN ME, MARDENBURG. NO LONGER WILL YOU STAND IN MY WAY. THE VON FELSENWEIRS HAVE CONQUERED!

BUT HAD THEY? AS VON FELSENWEIR RODE OFF ON THE STOLEN HORSE AN UNEASY FEELING CLUTCHED HIS HEART AND STIFLED HIS THROAT

HIS CURSES CAN DO ME NO HARM--YET WHO CAN TELL. I'LL VISIT GAFFER KLAUS WHEN I GET HOME. HE KNOWS MORE OF CHARMS AND WITCHCRAFT THAN ANY IN ALL CARPATHIA.

FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS ALL WAS WELL AND VON FELSENWEIR SOON FORGOT HIS DREAD. THEN ONE DAY WHEN HIS GROOMS ENTERED THE STABLES

OHHHH...

IT IS THE BARON! QUICK, HELP ME!

EXCELLENCY! WHAT HAPPENED?

THE HORSE!—IT WAS THE HORSE!—KILL IT!—CURSE OF MARDENBURG UHHH

HE IS DEAD!

DID YOU HEAR THAT? IT IS ALMOST AS IF HE KNEW WHAT HAPPENED. WE MUST GET RID OF HIM AT ONCE. HE IS TRULY ACCURSED!

AND SO THE VON FELSENWEIRS MET THEIR FATE ONE BY ONE FOR SIX HUNDRED YEARS. LET'S LOOK IN NOW ON FREDERICK, TENTH AND LAST OF THE BARONS.

FREDERICK, WHAT'S THE STORY BEHIND THIS TAPESTRY?

IT SHOWS MY ANCESTOR, FREDERICK THE FIRST, KILLING A MARDENBURG, ONE OF OUR HATED ENEMIES!

ENEMIES? SURELY YOU CAN'T MEAN THAT? WHY YOU CAN ALMOST LOOK INTO MARDENBURG CASTLE FROM YOURS--AND BESIDES, YOU'RE RACING YOUR HORSES AGAINST THEIRS THIS VERY AFTERNOON!

THAT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE. ALL VON FELSENWEIRS HATE MARDENBURGS. WE ALWAYS HAVE AND WE ALWAYS WILL!



FROM THAT DAY FORTH FREDERICK WAS A CHANGED MAN. MADNESS SEEMED TO HOLD HIM IN ITS GRIP...

WHAT ARE YOU BRINGING ME? I DIDN'T ASK FOR WINE!

BUT YOU DID, SIR! YOU TOLD ME TO SERVE IT IN HERE AND... Y!!!

GET OUT OF HERE, YOU LOUT! I'LL TEACH YOU TO CALL ME A LIAR! I'LL TEACH YOU...!

I'M SORRY, SIR! I'M SORRY!



STAY OUT OF HERE AND LEAVE ME ALONE!

WHAT HAPPENED?

HE -- HE SMASHED THE TRAY OUT OF MY HAND. HE SAID HE NEVER SENT FOR WINE.

HE'S BEEN THIS WAY EVER SINCE THE DAY OF THE RACE. I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT.

IF HE KEEPS ON THIS WAY I'M LEAVING. I DON'T HAVE TO STAY HERE AND TAKE HIS ABUSE.

HE EITHER SITS IN THE TOWER ROOM AND STARES AT THAT TAPESTRY OR STARES OUT THE WINDOW AT MARDENBURG CASTLE.

YES... I'M WORRIED. SOMETHING TERRIBLE WILL HAPPEN. I KNOW IT.



I SHOULD HAVE WON THAT RACE! EVERYONE KNOWS THAT OUR HORSES ARE THE BEST IN THE WORLD. NOW VON MARDENBURG SITS IN HIS CASTLE AND LAUGHS AT ME!



LAUGH AT ME, WILL HE? I'LL PUT A STOP TO THAT THIS VERY NIGHT!



SOME HOURS LATER IN A DARK CORNER OF THE VON MARDENBURG STABLES. FREDERICK WATCHED AS FLAMES LICKED HUNGRILY AT ITS DRIED AND ANCIENT BOARDS.

SOON, COUNT VON MARDENBURG, YOU WILL HAVE NO HORSES. YOUR STABLES WILL BE GONE. NO LONGER WILL YOU LORD IT OVER ME!



NO MARDENBURG CAN CONQUER A VON FELSENWEIR! NOT WHILE I LIVE!



HURRYING BACK TO THE ROOM IN THE TOWER FREDERICK WATCHED THE BURNING STABLES WITH BROODING THOUGHTS.

IF THEY BUT KNEW WHOSE HAND HAD PUT THE TORCH TO THOSE STABLES. IF THEY BUT KNEW!



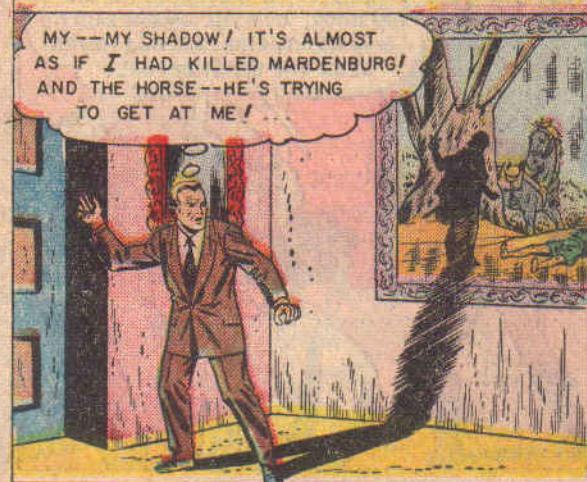
SUDDENLY SOMETHING COMPELLED FREDERICK TO TURN AND LOOK AT THE TAPESTRY. WHAT HE SAW BROUGHT MOUNTING TERROR.

THE HORSE'S HEAD! IT TURNED! IT'S LOOKING AT ME! LET ME OUT OF HERE!



AS FREDERICK BACKED TOWARD THE DOOR SICK WITH FRIGHT AN EVEN STRANGER THING OCCURRED...

MY--MY SHADOW! IT'S ALMOST AS IF I HAD KILLED MARDENBURG! AND THE HORSE--HE'S TRYING TO GET AT ME!



IN A PANIC FREDERICK FLED FROM THE ROOM. AS HE REACHED THE CASTLE TERRACE

IT'S AS IF IT WERE AN OMEN! YET I HAVE KILLED NO ONE.

YOUR EXCELLENCY, I MUST SPEAK TO YOU!



WHAT IS IT? WHAT DO YOU WANT?

I HAVE BAD NEWS, SIR. COUNT VON MARDENBURG IS DEAD. I THOUGHT YOU SHOULD KNOW IMMEDIATELY!



DEAD? YOU SAY COUNT VON MARDENBURG IS DEAD? HOW? HOW DID HE DIE?

HE WAS KILLED TRYING TO RESCUE SOME OF HIS HORSES FROM THE FLAMES. IT WAS TERRIBLE. POOR MAN, MAY GOD REST HIS SOUL.



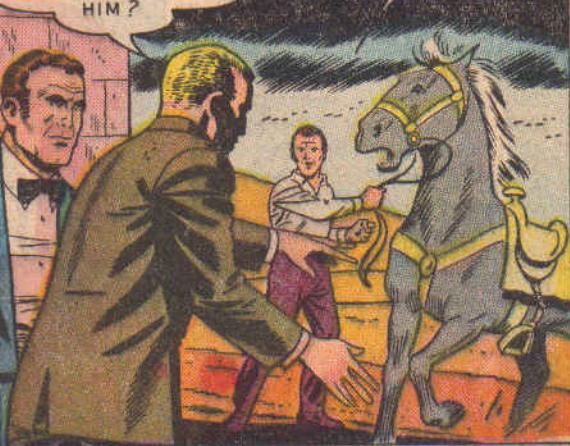
DEAD, YOU SAY?--THE COUNT IS DEAD? THEN THE TAPESTRY WAS AN OMEN! I--

WHAT DID YOU SAY, SIR?

BARON! BARON!

THAT HORSE! IT'S THE ONE FROM THE TAPESTRY! IT-- WHOSE HORSE IS THIS? WHERE DID YOU GET HIM?

HE MUST BE YOURS, SIR. NO ONE ELSE CLAIMS HIM...



MINE?--MINE?

WE CAUGHT HIM FLYING, ALL SMOKING AND FOAMING, FROM THE STABLES OF MARDENBURG. WE LED HIM BACK, BUT THE GROOM SAID IT WAS NOT THEIRS. HE HAS NEVER SEEN THE BEAST BEFORE.



AT THAT MOMENT FREDERICK RECEIVED STRANGE NEWS...

SIR, SOMETHING VERY STRANGE HAS HAPPENED. SOMEONE HAS CUT OUT PART OF THE TAPESTRY IN THE TOWER CHAMBER! THE ONE WITH THE HUGE HORSE.

THE--THE ONE WITH THE HORSE?



YES, SIR. THEY CUT OUT THE PART THAT DEPICTED THE HORSE. I DISCOVERED IT WHEN I WENT TO LOOK FOR YOU.

HAVE THAT ROOM LOCKED IMMEDIATELY. QUICK, BE GONE!



UNABLE TO STILL THE TERROR THAT HAD TAKEN HOLD OF HIM FREDERICK CALLED FOR THE WILD STEED...

BUT, SIR, HE IS ALMOST UNCONTROLLABLE. PERHAPS IT WOULD BE BETTER IF YOU TOOK ANOTHER.



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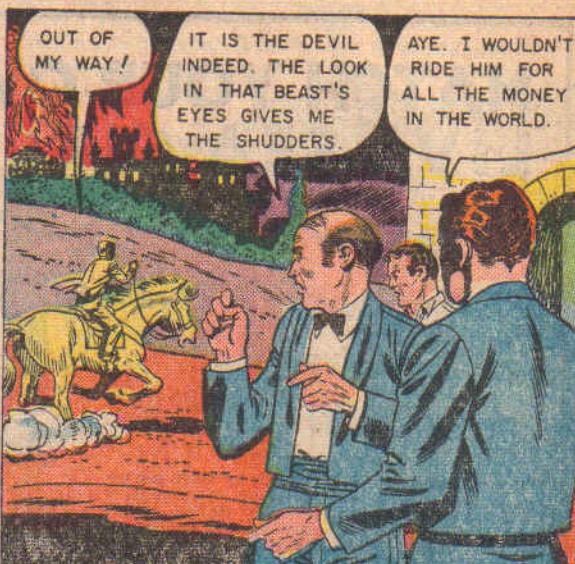
NONSENSE! THERE IS NO HORSE IN THIS WORLD THAT I CAN'T CONTROL, BE HE DEVIL OR FLESH!



OUT OF MY WAY!

IT IS THE DEVIL INDEED. THE LOOK IN THAT BEAST'S EYES GIVES ME THE SHUDDERS.

AYE. I WOULDN'T RIDE HIM FOR ALL THE MONEY IN THE WORLD.



AS FREDERICK RODE OFF DARK CLOUDS BEGAN TO GATHER WITHIN THE HOUR THE HEAVENS BURST, BRINGING A TERRIBLE STORM. SUDDENLY THERE WAS A TERRIFIC CRASH OF THUNDER AND A GIGANTIC BOLT OF LIGHTNING HIT THE CASTLE



SEND FOR THE FIRE DEPARTMENT! TOO LATE. HURRY!

IT WILL BE TOO LATE. THE FLAMES ARE SPREADING LIKE WILDFIRE!



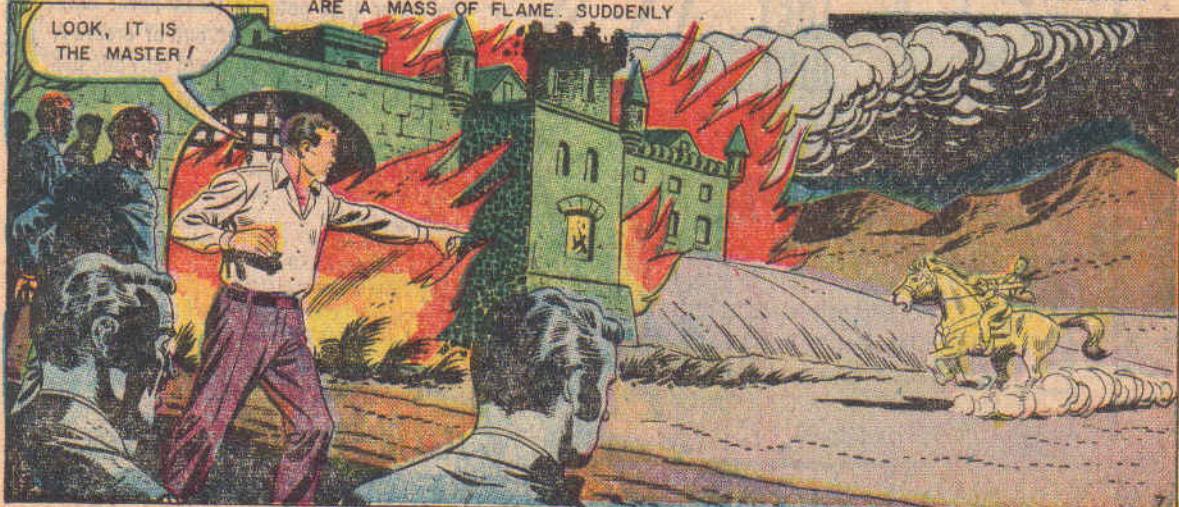
THE MASTER IS OUT RIDING. SOMEONE MUST FIND HIM!

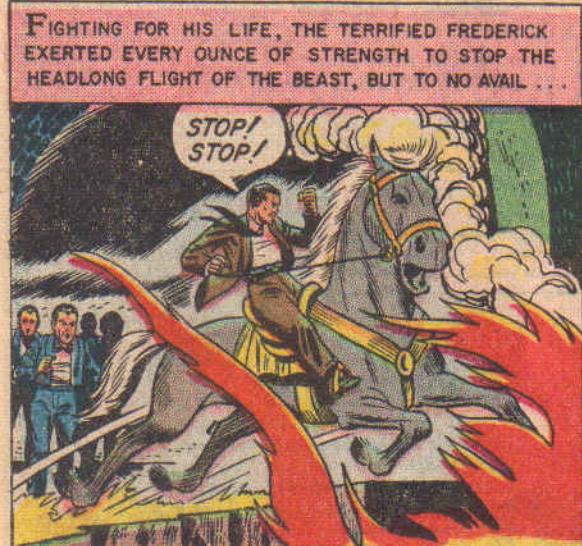
IN THIS STORM? IT IS IMPOSSIBLE!



IN WHAT SEEMED AN INSTANT, THE STUPENDOUS AND MAGNIFICENT BATTLEMENTS OF CASTLE VON FELSENWEIR ARE A MASS OF FLAME. SUDDENLY

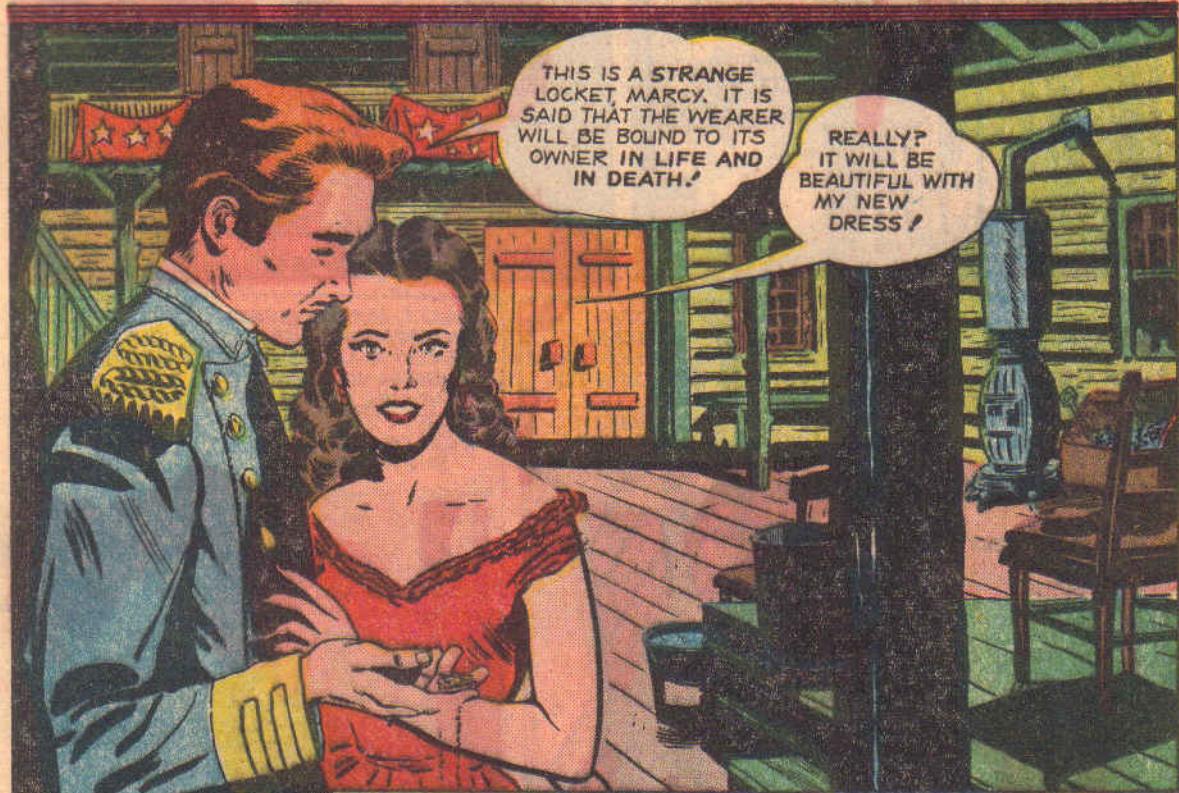
LOOK, IT IS THE MASTER!





PERHAPS THERE IS SOME LOGICAL EXPLANATION FOR WHAT HAPPENED TO MARCY FENTON. NONE WHO WITNESSED THOSE STRANGE EVENTS COULD EXPLAIN IT. IT WOULD BE SIMPLE TO SAY THEY IMAGINED THE WHOLE THING, BUT THEY DIDN'T. THEY SAW...

The FINAL WALTZ



THE HOME OF JEB AUSTIN AS HE SAYS GOODBYE TO HIS GRANDFATHER BEFORE JOINING HIS REGIMENT...

JEB, I HAVEN'T MUCH TO GIVE YOU AS A GOING AWAY PRESENT... SO I'D LIKE YOU TO HAVE THIS.

WHAT IS IT, GRANDFATHER?



IT'S A CHARM GIVEN TO ME BY A CONJURE MAN IN NEW ORLEANS MANY YEARS AGO!

A CHARM? IT'S VERY ODD! WHAT IS IT SUPPOSED TO DO?

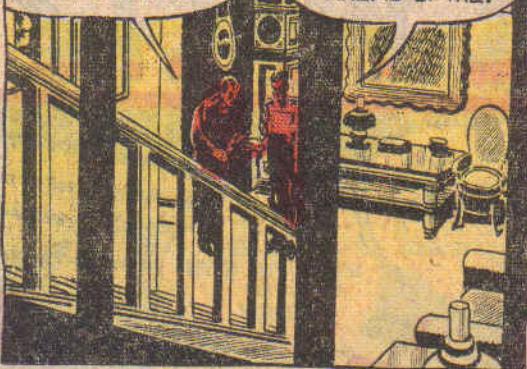


WELL, IT
PROTECTS A MAN
IN LOVE. THE GIRL
YOU GIVE THIS LOCKET
TO WILL BE BOUND
TO YOU FOREVER
... IN LIFE AND
IN DEATH?

BUT GRANDFATHER
I DON'T BELIEVE IN
MAGIC AND CHAMPS.
BESIDES, I'M NOT
PLANNING TO FALL
IN LOVE. I'VE GOT
MY CAREER
AHEAD OF ME!

NEVER CAN TELL ...
HUMOR AN OLD MAN,
SON, AND WEAR IT UNTIL
YOU DO. THEN GIVE IT
TO YOUR GIRL. YOU
WON'T REGRET
IT!

ALL RIGHT, IF IT
WILL PLEASE YOU...
I'VE GOT TO GO NOW.
IT'S GETTING NEAR
TRAIN TIME ...
I'LL WRITE.



FOR THE NEXT
FEW YEARS
JEB CARRIED
THE LOCKET
CONSTANTLY.
GIRLS SAW
IT BUT
NEVER WORE
IT. THEN
HE WAS
TRANSFERRED
TO FORT
DEFIANCE
IN INDIAN
TERRITORY



JUMPING
JEHOSEPHAT!
GET A MOVE ON,
JEB! YOU'VE
BEEN SLICKING
UP FOR AN
HOUR
NOW!

GOT A
SPECIAL
REASON SAM!
I'M GOING TO
ASK THE
COLONEL'S
DAUGHTER
TO MARRY
ME!

WHAT! MARRY MARCY
FENTON? ARE YOU
CRAZY, MAN? SHE'LL
LAUGH IN YOUR FACE!
THAT GIRL IS THE
BIGGEST FLIRT THIS
SIDE OF THE ROCKIES.
SHE... HEY!

CUT THAT
OUT, SAM. I
HAPPEN TO
LOVE MARCY,
AND I DON'T
LIKE WHAT
YOU'RE
SAYING!



EASY, BOY! I
DIDN'T MEAN TO
GET YOU ANGRY...
I WAS JUST TELLING
YOU SOMETHING
FOR YOUR OWN
GOOD.

KEEP YOUR AD-
VICE FOR SOMEONE
WHO NEEDS IT...
I CAN TAKE
CARE OF MY-
SELF!

MEANWHILE, AT THE DANCE...

MY MARCY, AREN'T YOU
PRETTY TONIGHT? ALL DRESSED
UP FOR CAPTAIN AUSTEN?

CAPTAIN
AUSTEN? WHAT
DO YOU MEAN?



WHY IT'S ALL
OVER THE FORT
THAT HE'S GOING
TO ASK YOU TO
MARRY HIM
TONIGHT!

ME MARRY THAT
FUNERAL PARLOR
ATTENDANT? I WOULDN'T
MARRY HIM IF HE WERE
THE LAST MAN ON THE
POST! HE'S SO SERIOUS
ALL THE TIME!

WELL, YOU'VE CERTAINLY
BEEN PAYING ENOUGH
ATTENTION TO HIM...
ANYONE WOULD THINK
YOU TWO WERE HEAD
OVER HEELS IN LOVE!

REALLY? WELL IF
YOU MUST KNOW, HE
HAS A CURIOUS
LOCKET THAT I'M
DYING TO GET. ONE
OF THESE DAYS I'M
GOING TO GET IT!

MARCY FENTON...
HOW COULD YOU?
THAT--THAT'S
PLAIN BRAZEN!

BE
STILL!
HERE
HE
COMES!

CAROL, YOU'LL
EXCUSE US...
MARGY HAS
THIS DANCE
PROMISED
TO ME.

THAT'S RIGHT,
JEB...I'VE
BEEN
WAITING
FOR YOU!

THE DANCE HAD SCARCELY BEGUN
WHEN THERE WAS A SUDDEN
INTERRUPTION!

GENTLEMEN, I HAVE JUST
RECEIVED WORD THE APACHES
ARE ON THE WARPATH!
WE HAVE ORDERS TO
STOP THEM!

ALERT YOUR MEN AND BE READY
TO RIDE IN THREE HOURS! GET
YOUR GOODBYES SAID NOW! YOU WILL
PROBABLY BE IN THE FIELD FOR AT
LEAST THREE WEEKS!

AS THE
LADIES
WATCHED
IN DISMAY,
THE
OFFICERS
BEGAN TO
HURRY
OUT. JEB
DREW
MARGY
TO ONE
SIDE...

MARCY, I HAD SOMETHING
TO ASK YOU TONIGHT...
BUT IT'LL HAVE TO WAIT!
YOU KNOW I'M IN LOVE
WITH YOU... PROMISE
YOU'LL WAIT UNTIL
I GET BACK!

I PROMISE,
JEB...WE'LL
MAKE A
PACT!
GIVE ME THAT
LOCKET YOU
CARRY ON YOUR
WATCH CHAIN...
IT'LL SEAL THE
BOND BETWEEN
US!

JEB TOOK OUT THE LOCKET AND TRIED TO TELL MARCY OF ITS STRANGE POWER! SHE WAS ONLY INTERESTED IN HOW IT WOULD LOOK ON HER...



THE WEEKS SLIPPED BY AND MARCY PROMPTLY FORGOT HER PROMISE TO JEB. SHE HAD A NEW INTEREST... A HANDSOME MAJOR NEWLY ARRIVED FROM THE EAST!



BUT, MARCY, WHAT ABOUT JEB AUSTEN? YOU TOLD ME YOU PROMISED TO WAIT UNTIL HE RETURNED!



THE WHOLE FORT WAS AGOG WITH THE NEWS. TO THE TINY GROUP IN THAT ISOLATED SPOT IT WAS THE EVENT OF THE YEAR

ARE YOU MEN GOING TO HAVE THOSE DECORATIONS FINISHED IN TIME FOR THE WEDDING TOMORROW? REMEMBER THEY HAVE TO BE JUST RIGHT!

DON'T WORRY, SIR, THEY'LL BE DONE AND DONE RIGHT!

MEANWHILE, FAR OUT ON THE DESERT, JEB AUSTEN AND A PATROL GRIMLY TRY TO FIGHT OFF AN INDIAN ATTACK...



HERE THEY
COME AGAIN.
WE'RE DONE
FOR!

TAKE IT EASY,
SERGEANT... WE'RE
GOING BACK! I'VE
GOT A DATE AT THE
FORT THAT'S GOT TO BE
KEPT AND I MEAN TO
KEEP IT... POUR IT
ON, MEN!

AFTER THE CEREMONY THE
CROWD WATCHED IN ADMIRA-
TION AS THE NEW BRIDE AND
GROOM STEPPED OUT FOR
THE FIRST DANCE...

ISN'T SHE
BEAUTIFUL!

AND HE'S SO
HANDSOME... I
KNOW THEY'LL
BE HAPPY!

SUDDENLY, THE LIGHTS SEEMED
TO DIM. THE DOOR AT THE END
OF THE HUGE ROOM FLEW OPEN.
THERE WAS JEB!

AUSTEN! IT'S
CAPTAIN AUSTEN!

FOR A MOMENT HE STARED
AT THE BRIDE AND THEN
HOLDING OUT HIS ARMS HE
DREW HER FROM THE CLASP
OF THE MAJOR...

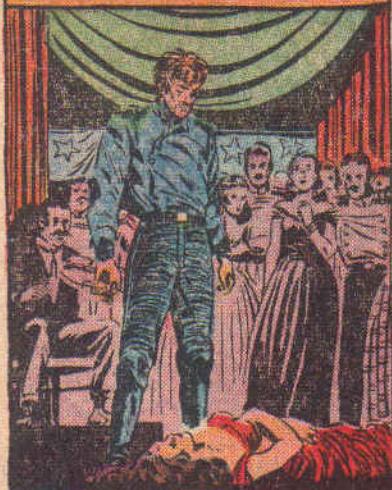
J-JEB! WHAT
DO YOU
WANT?

THE COMPANY STOOD IN A TRANCE AS AUSTEN
CLASPED THE BRIDE TO HIS BOSOM AND
BEGAN A DANCE...

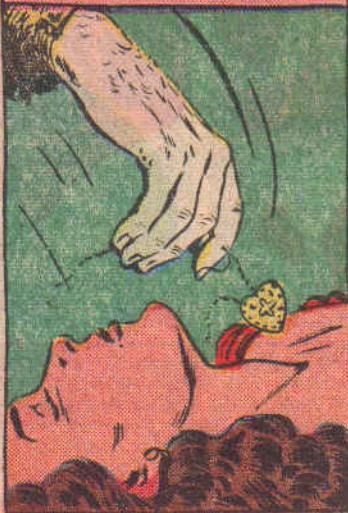
THE MUSICIANS PLAYED FASTER AND FASTER,
UNABLE TO STOP, AS ROUND AND ROUND THE
COUPLE SPUN!



SUDDENLY, AS IF BY SIGNAL, THE MUSIC STOPPED. MARCY SANK SLOWLY TO THE FLOOR...DEAD! THE CROWD, UNABLE TO MOVE, STOOD TRANSFIGURED WITH HORROR!



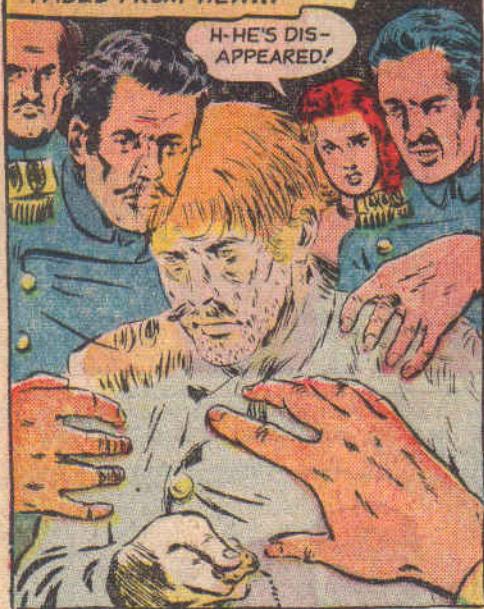
AUSTEN BENT AND TORE THE LOCKET FROM THE GIRL'S BRIDAL GOWN. THE SILENCE ENGULFED THE ROOM IN A GREAT WAVE...



THEN, WITHOUT A BACKWARD GLANCE, HE TURNED AND WALKED TOWARDS THE DOOR AS THE ASSEMBLAGE CAME TO LIFE...



A DOZEN HANDS REACHED TO STOP HIM, BUT THEY GRASPED ONLY AIR. EVEN AS THEY WATCHED, AUSTEN FADED FROM VIEW...



AS THE CROWD STARED BLANKLY AT THE SPOT WHERE AUSTEN HAD DIS-APPEARED, A TIRED, DUSTY TROOPER HURRIED INTO THE BALLROOM...



CAPTAIN AUSTEN! SIR, THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!

IMPOSSIBLE? WHY?



BECAUSE HE'S DEAD! CAPTAIN AUSTEN AND ALL OF HIS MEN WERE MASSACRED BY THE INDIANS TWO DAYS AGO!



A WEEK LATER, THEY BROUGHT IN THE BODY OF JEB AUSTEN. A STRANGE FEELING WENT THROUGH THOSE WHO VIEWED THE REMAINS, FOR CLUTCHED IN HIS HAND WAS THE VERY SAME LOCKET HE HAD TORN FROM MARCY FENTON'S DRESS!!



The End.

THE BEST AUTOMOBILE Sticker

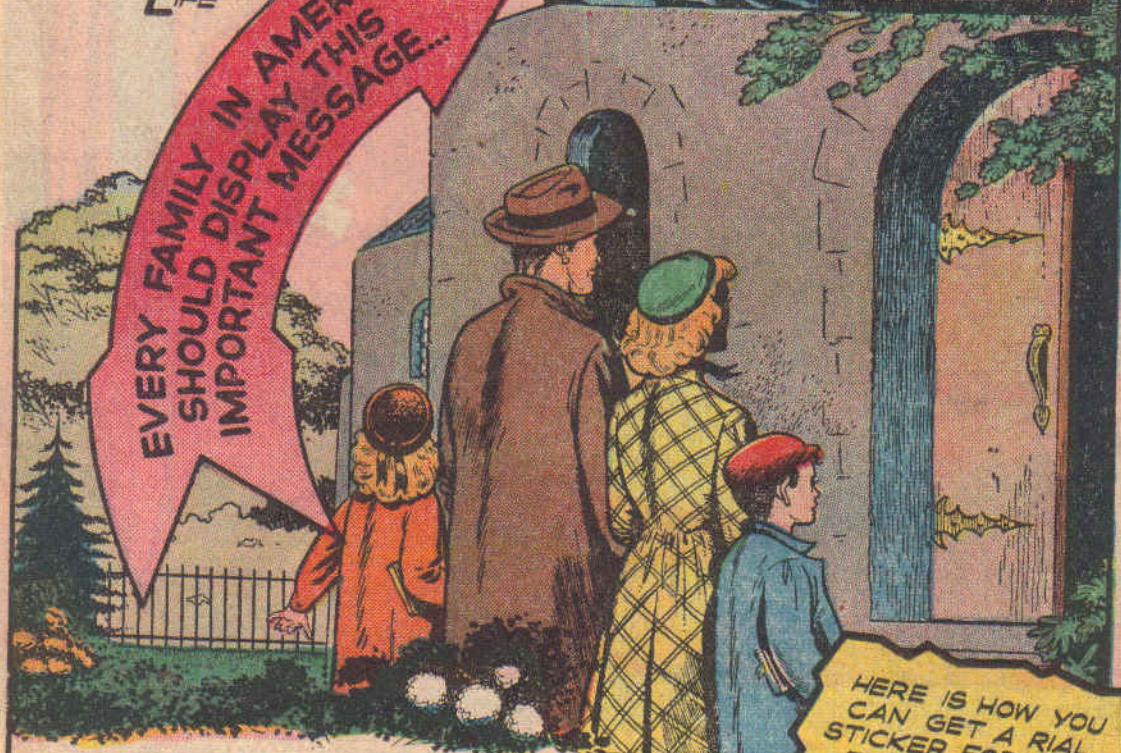
RELIGION
IN
AMERICAN
LIFE

EVERY FAMILY
SHOULD DISPLAY THIS
IMPORTANT MESSAGE...



He restoreth
your soul...

Worship together this week

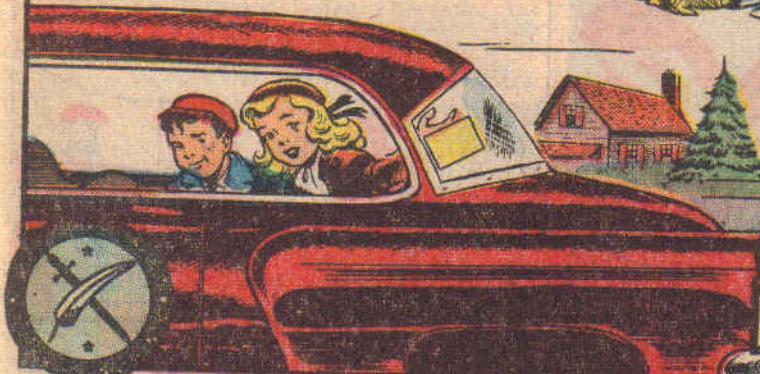


HERE IS HOW YOU
CAN GET A REAL
STICKER FOR YOUR
FAMILY CAR...

WRITE TO:
RELIGION IN
AMERICAN LIFE

300 FOURTH AVE.
NEW YORK 10, N.Y.

SEND TEN CENTS TO
COVER HANDLING
CHARGES...



COMPLY WITH YOUR STATE
LAWS IN PASTING STICKER
ON CAR WINDOWS...

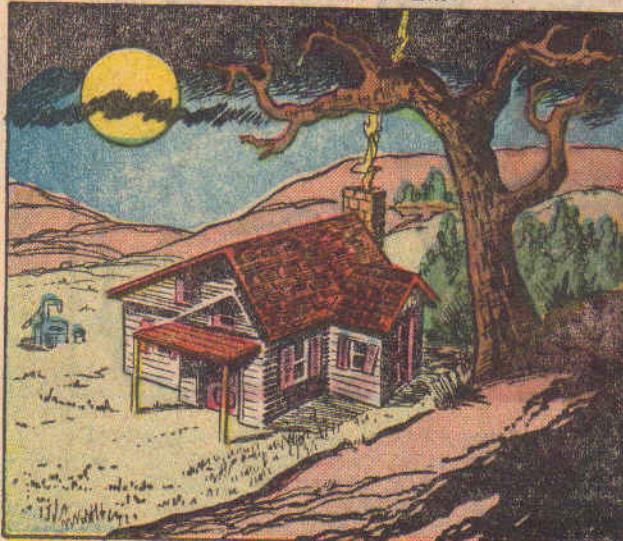
PREPARED IN COOPERATION WITH THE RELIGION
IN AMERICAN LIFE AND THE ADVERTISING
COUNCIL BY THE ASSOCIATION OF COMICS
MAGAZINES PUBLISHERS...

WHAT WAS THE FRIGHTFUL SECRET THAT KEPT THE FARM EMPTY? UNOCCUPIED BY MORTALS, THE DECAYING HOUSE HAD THE EERIE REPUTATION OF BEING HAUNTED EVER SINCE THE SLAYING THAT HAD TAKEN PLACE WITHIN ITS DARK WALLS... THE SLAYING THAT LED TO THE STRANGE TALE OF...

THE Shadow ^{OVER} Manton Farm



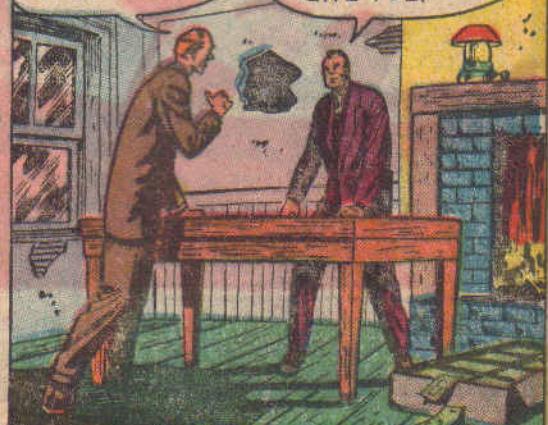
A PALE MOON CASTS EERIE SHADOWS OVER A GRIM LOOKING FARMHOUSE BURIED IN THE TIME-WORN HILLS OF MAINE...



INSIDE THOSE FORBIDDING WALLS TWO MEN QUARREL OVER ILL-GOTTEN GAINS...

DON'T RAT ON ME NOW, KEELER! OUR DEAL WAS THAT WE SPLIT THE DOUGH FIFTY-FIFTY!

MAYBE, BUT I'VE CHANGED MY MIND! I TOOK ALL THE RISK! YOU'LL TAKE WHAT I WANT TO GIVE YOU!



THE ARGUMENT GROWS MORE VIOLENT! SUDDENLY...

YOU DIRTY DOUBLECROSSER, YOU AIN'T GETTIN' AWAY WITH THIS! HALF OF THAT MONEY IS MINE!

WAS, JENKS, WAS! I THINK NOW I'LL TAKE IT ALL!

NOW WAIT A MINUTE, LEW! I... WAS A LITTLE HASTY! YOU WOULDN'T SHOOT A PAL... UHH...

SO LONG, PAL...

YOU... YOU MURDERING SKUNK... I'LL GET EVEN ON YOU... EVEN IF I HAVE TO COME BACK FROM THE GRAVE TO DO IT...

I'LL GET EVEN... I'LL GET EVEN... OHHH...

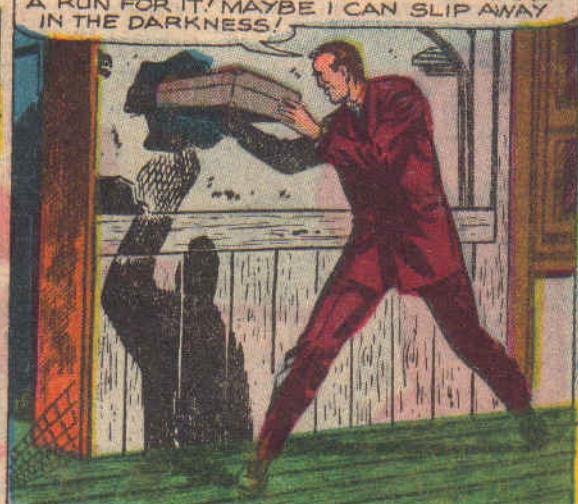
THREE HUNDRED GRAND AND IT'S ALL MINE! ALL MINE!



AS HE GETS READY TO LEAVE, KEELER HEARS A NOISE IN THE FARMYARD...

COPS! I GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE!

I'LL HIDE THE DOUGH IN HERE AND MAKE A RUN FOR IT. MAYBE I CAN SLIP AWAY IN THE DARKNESS!



HURRYING TO THE BACK OF THE HOUSE, KEELER SLIPS OUT A WINDOW...

THEY MAY GET ME BUT THEY WON'T GET THAT DOUGH!

AND IN THE FRONT...



A MOMENT LATER...

THERE HE GOES! IT AIN'T GOING TO BE EASY, IN ALL THAT UNDERBRUSH. I'D BETTER SEND BACK FOR A POSSE!

BAM



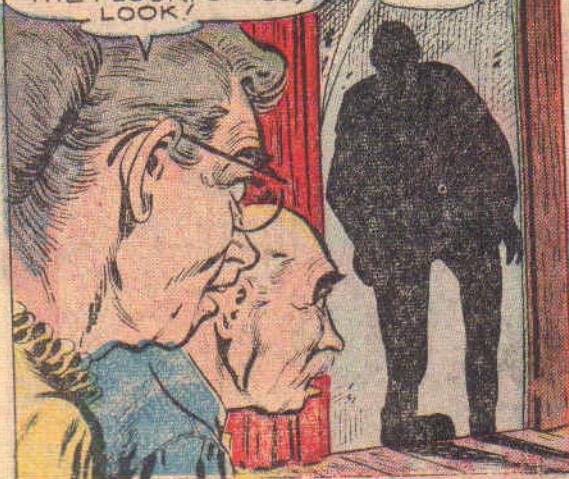
DON'T WORRY, HE CAN'T GET VERY FAR, SOONER OR LATER, WE'LL RUN HIM DOWN!

IF YOU DON'T, I WILL! I'LL FIND HIM IF IT TAKES TEN YEARS!



IT SOUNDS JUST LIKE SOMEONE DRAGGING A LAME FOOT ACROSS THE FLOOR! CALEB, LOOK!

IT'S... IT'S THE SHADOW OF A MAN... A LAME MAN!



THE MONTHS PASS AND THE KILLING IS FORGOTTEN. THE OLD FARM, RENTED, BECOMES ALIVE AND WARM ONCE MORE.

COFFEE'S ON THE STOVE, CALEB! I'LL BE IN AS SOON AS I FEED THE CHICKENS!



FOR A WHILE ALL IS WELL, THEN STRANGE DISTURBANCES MAKE THE NIGHT UNENDURABLE...

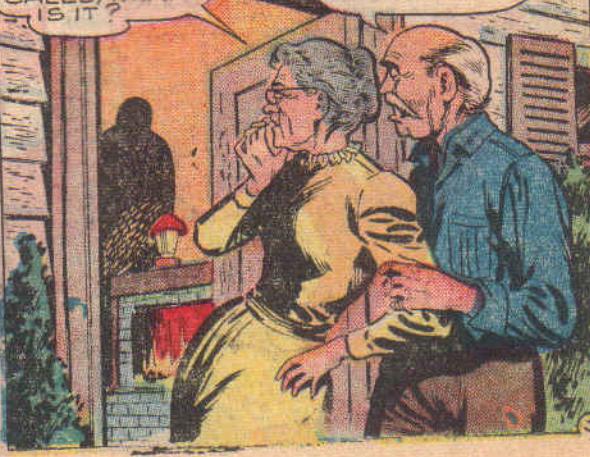
CALEB, IT'S THAT AWFUL THUMPING AGAIN. CAN YOU DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT?

IVE TRIED EVERYTHING, BUT DANGED IF I CAN FIND OUT WHAT'S MAKING IT!



IT'S GOTTEN SO COLD... THE LIGHTS HAVE GROWN SO DIM AND THE FIRE FLICKERS SO STRANGELY! CALEB, WHAT IS IT?

I DON'T KNOW AND I DON'T INTEND TO FIND OUT. WE'RE LEAVING THIS PLACE RIGHT NOW!



AGAIN AND AGAIN THE OLD HOUSE IS RENTED, BUT NO FAMILY WILL REMAIN FOR MORE THAN A FEW WEEKS...

IF YOU'D CARE TO RECONSIDER, MISTER HALL, I'M SURE WE COULD MAKE A REDUCTION IN THE RENT...

NO, SIR! WE WOULDN'T STAY THERE ANY LONGER IF YOU GAVE US THE PLACE **FREE!**

SOON MANTON FARM RETURNED TO IT'S DESERTED STATE AND THE TOWNS - PEOPLE BEGAN TO WHISPER STORIES ABOUT ITS HAUNTED ROOMS...

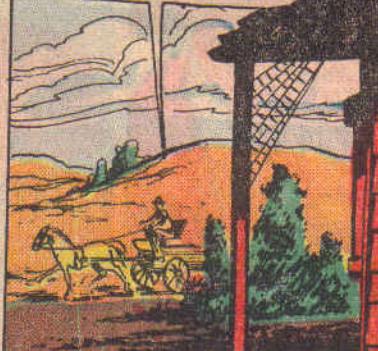
ONE DAY A STRANGER ARRIVES IN THE TOWN NEAR MANTON FARM AND VISITS THE REAL ESTATE AGENT...

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO GO OUT THERE FOR, STRANGER? IT ISN'T SAFE! THAT HOUSE IS HAUNTED!

THAT'S EXACTLY WHY I'M HERE! MY BUSINESS IS EXAMINING HAUNTED HOUSES! I'M A PSYCHIC INVESTIGATOR!



GIDDAP, DOBBIN! I DON'T WANT TO STICK AROUND THESE PARTS ALL ALONE! IT'S GOIN' TO BE DARK PURTY SOON...

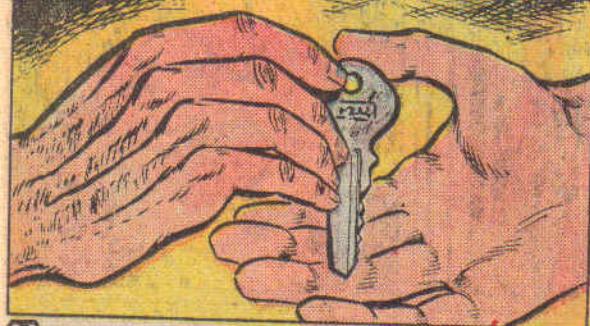


I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU ARE, MISTER! I WOULDN'T BE FOOL ENOUGH TO GO OUT TO THAT HOUSE! IT ISN'T EVEN UP FOR RENTAL ANYMORE...

GHOSTS DON'T BOTHER ME. I INTEND TO GO OUT THERE THIS VERY NIGHT!

FRIEND, YOU'RE CRAZIER THAN I THOUGHT! WELL, YOU'VE GOT THE KEY BUT DON'T BLAME ME IF ANYTHING HAPPENS!

I WON'T! SEE YOU TOMORROW MORNING!



THAT'S RIGHT, YOU GUessed IT! IT'S KEELER COMING BACK FOR THE MONEY HE STOLE AND KILLED TO GET! WHEN IT WAS DARK...

SHORTLY AFTER KEELER LEAVES FOR THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE...

NOBODY'LL COME SNOOPING AROUND WHILE I GET THAT DOUGH...THAT'S FOR SURE! THESE YOKELS ARE TOO SCARED TO COME WITHIN A MILE OF THE PLACE!



HELLO, SHERIFF, REMEMBER ME?

SURE DO! YOU'RE THAT INSURANCE COMPANY DETECTIVE! WHAT BRINGS YOU AROUND HERE?



SAME THING AS BEFORE...
KEELER! HE LEFT FOR
MANTON FARM ABOUT TEN
MINUTES AGO! THAT
MONEY IS STILL IN-
SIDE THAT HOUSE!

WHAT ARE WE
WAITING FOR?
LET'S GO!



MEANWHILE AT THE FARMHOUSE, KEELER
HAS RECLAIMED THE STOLEN MONEY
FROM ITS HIDING PLACE! AS HE GLOATS...

THREE HUNDRED GRAND AND IT'S
ALL MINE... BRRR! IT'S GETTING
AWFUL COLD IN HERE...



SUDDENLY THE SOUND OF A
DRAGGING FOOT SCRAPING
ACROSS THE FLOOR ECHOES
THROUGH THE ROOM...

THAT SHADOW! IT LOOKS
LIKE... NO! IT CAN'T BE!

NO! NO!
KEEP
BACK!



AND SO THEY FOUND HIM... DEAD... THE
BILLS STILL CLUTCHED IN HIS HAND AND
STARK TERROR ETCHED ON HIS FACE...

THERE COMING ACROSS THE ROOM
STRAIGHT TOWARD THE CORPSE WAS A LINE
OF MUDDY FOOTPRINTS MADE BY A MAN...
A MAN WITH A CLUBFOOT!...



HE WAS FRIGHTENED TO DEATH!
MAYBE THERE IS SOMETHING TO THIS
HAUNTED HOUSE BUSINESS!

THEY... THEY ONLY GO ONE
WAY. THEY COME FROM
NOWHERE AND THEY GO
NOWHERE! WHAT'S THE
EXPLANATION?

ONE THING,
SHERIFF! IT
LOOKS AS IF
PETE JENKS HAS
FINALLY HAD HIS
REVENGE!

THE END

STRANGE RANSOM

IN the quarter-century immediately following the end of the Civil War, New York City was a paradise for criminals. An underworld profession that flourished in the hands of several highly organized gangs was that of grave-robery. They usually operated on the modest resting places of paupers, doing a brisk trade in cadavers with doctors and medical students. Little was done about it until, in 1878, the body of Alexander T. Stewart, a widely known millionaire merchant, was stolen from the family vault and held for ransom, creating one of the greatest public stirs the metropolis has ever witnessed.

Alexander T. Stewart, a small, thin man with reddish hair and notably cold gray eyes, had started his career as an obscure shopkeeper, but through extraordinary energy and ruthless business acumen rose to be the most prominent merchant prince of his time. At the apex of his career, he owned a huge store covering the block on Broadway between Ninth and Tenth Streets. His rule was never to trust anybody—he sold only for cash—and when he died in 1876 he had a fortune of \$30,000,000 and all the influence such staggering wealth bestows.

His body was scarcely in its grave at St. Mark's-in-the-Bowerie at Second Avenue and Tenth Street (then a fine neighborhood) when rumors spread that grave-robbers were planning to steal the corpse for ransom. However, though several underworld characters were found hanging about the graveyard during the next few weeks, no attempt was made to disturb the grave until Oct. 8, 1878, when the sexton found that someone had lifted the name slab. But the vault, which also contained four other bodies, had not been entered.

Henry Hilton, the attorney who was handling the estate for the widow (there were no children), had the locks changed

on the graveyard gates and, as camouflage, had the name slab moved and sunk into the turf ten feet away from the real grave. As a further precaution, a watchman was hired to check the graveyard once an hour during the night.

But when nothing more untoward had happened by November 3, 1878, Hilton felt that danger no longer threatened and the watchman was let go.

And the dawn of November 7 revealed that the body had been stolen in the night.

The robbers had bypassed the false name slab and had gone directly into the Stewart vault, which was constructed of brick and covered with three feet of earth. The lid of the outer cedar chest had been unscrewed, the lead coffin containing the casket cut through, the casket forced open, and the hundred-pound, unembalmed body of the merchant spirited away. The silver knobs and the name plate of the chest were taken and also a triangular piece of the velvet lining. The thieves left behind a new coal shovel and a lantern. Tracks near one of the cemetery gates showed that they had driven off with their loot in a wagon.

Next morning, the newspapers announced that the estate attorney, Hilton, had offered a reward of \$25,000 for the apprehension of the robbers and the return of the body. The crime was a sensation through the country. Over a hundred known criminals were made to produce alibis for their whereabouts on the night of the crime, and the authorities gave the thieves to understand that this was no ordinary crime for which political protection could be expected.

The police soon traced the shovel and lantern to their points of purchase, but there the trail ended. For months amateur and professional detectives searched for the body in carts, outhouses, barns and woods,

with resultant rumors periodically electrifying the newspapers. Armed guards were posted in cemeteries throughout New York City.

And then, the January following the crime, General Patrick H. Jones, a prominent lawyer, came to police superintendent Walling, who had taken personal charge of the case, bearing two of the silver handles and the knobs of the rifled chest, a small piece of the velvet lining, and a triangular piece of paper. These items, he said, he had just received in a package expressed from Canada. He had also received several letters signed "Henry G. Romaine," which requested that he act as go-between for the return of the body, for which the writer demanded a cash ransom of \$250,000. The General was instructed to use the personal columns of the *New York Herald* in conducting the negotiations.

One of the letters stated that the body had been taken to Canada and buried, and described the corpse as being in excellent condition and easily recognizable. As proof that the writer was really the robber, the letter pointed out that the triangular piece of paper he had sent was exactly the size of the piece of velvet torn from the casket lining and that the strip of velvet was of the same material as that used in the lining.

On instructions from the estate attorney, Hilton, and Superintendent Walling, General Jones inserted a personal in the *Herald* on February 5, saying he was ready to negotiate. Within a week, there came a reply from Romaine, postmarked Boston, offering to return the body under these conditions: The body would be delivered to General Jones and Hilton, none other to be present, at a point within twenty-five miles of Montreal, upon payment of \$200,000. The ransom money was to remain in the general's hands until Hilton was satisfied, and then turned over to Romaine's representative.

Hilton indignantly declined these terms and stated he would not negotiate further. But in the middle of March, after Romaine had unsuccessfully requested General Jones to approach the widow directly in the matter, Hilton made an offer of \$25,-

000. Romaine refused, "respectfully but firmly."

Things were thus deadlocked for over a year. And then the distraught Mrs. Stewart decided to act for herself, and instructed General Jones to make an offer of \$100,000 to Romaine. The general suggested a payment of \$20,000—and this was immediately accepted by Romaine, who gave the following instructions:

A lone messenger, with the ransom in cash in a canvas bag, was to leave New York City in a one-horse wagon on an appointed night at ten o'clock, thence to proceed into Westchester County, Connecticut, and drive along a certain little-used country road. Here the messenger would be met and instructed further.

On the night designated, a relative of the widow, who had volunteered to act as messenger, left the city as directed and soon was slowly driving along that lonely Connecticut road. He felt several times he was being observed, and at three in the morning a masked rider suddenly emerged from the woods and ordered him turn his wagon into a nearby lane.

After a mile, there loomed up ahead a buggy drawn across the lane. As he approached, two more masked men climbed down from it, one of them carrying a heavy gunnysack.

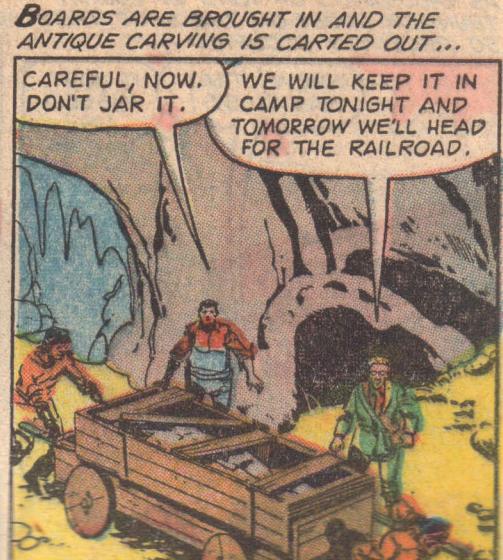
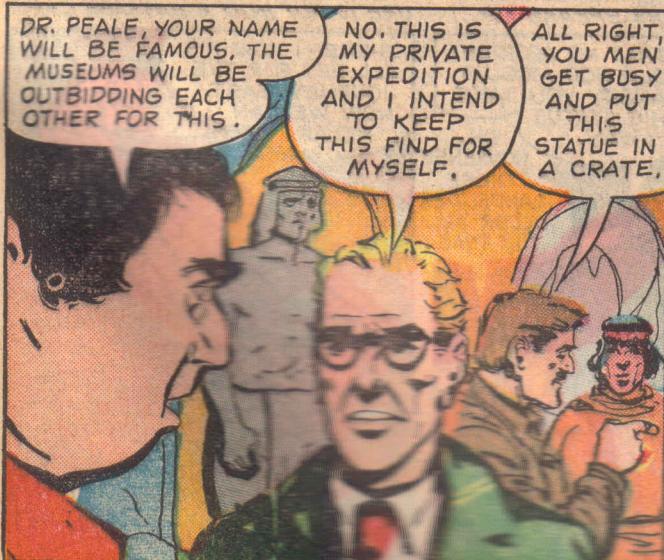
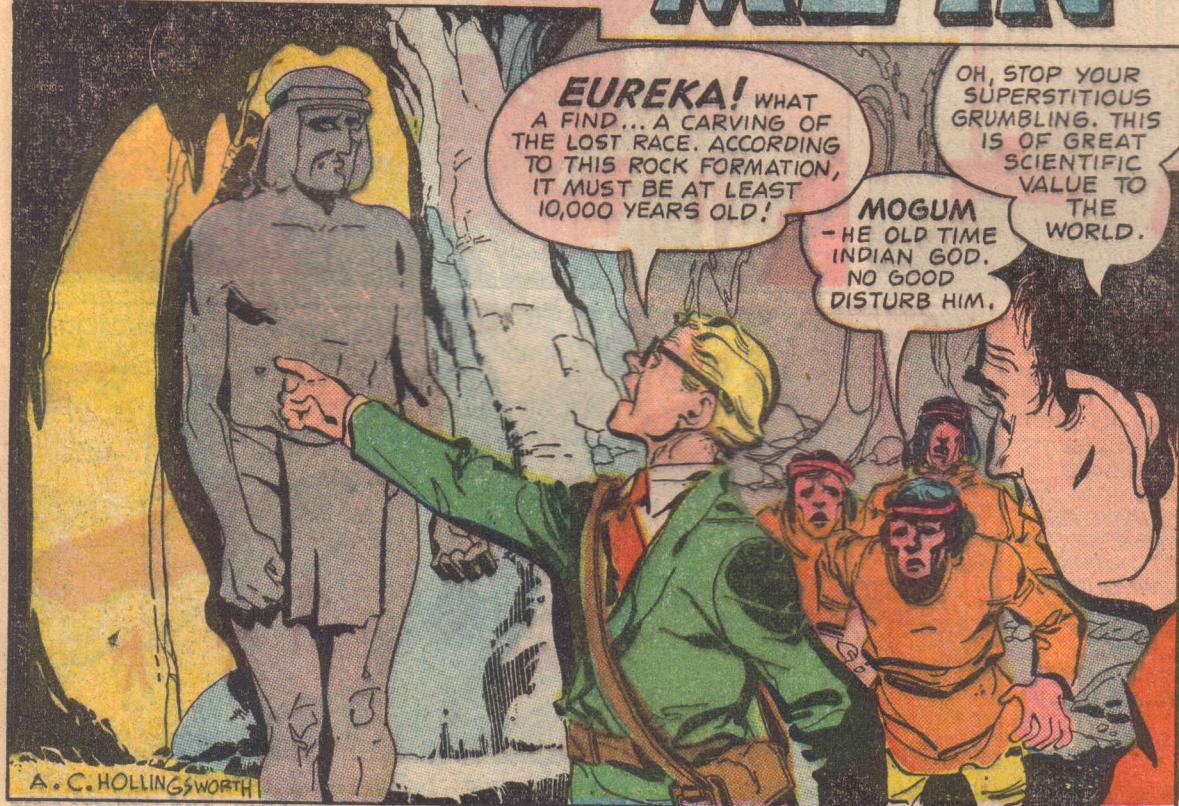
After the strangers had established their identity by producing a triangle of velvet, the messenger handed over the \$20,000. The gunnysack, which contained Stewart's bones, was thereupon unceremoniously heaved into the wagon. The robbers then drove away to the north in their buggy and the messenger with his cargo sped back to the city.

There the bones were turned over to an undertaker to be packed in a trunk, and the next night were transported in a special freight car to a waiting coffin in the burial vault of the Cathedral at Garden City, Long Island.

For many years, the vault was guarded by a hidden device which, if touched, would set off alarm bells in the Cathedral tower. But, at last report, the bones of Alexander T. Stewart are still at peace.

LONG BEFORE THE RACE WE KNOW AS THE AMERICAN INDIANS CAME TO THIS CONTINENT, ANOTHER ANCIENT AND MYSTERIOUS RACE OF MEN LIVED HERE. FOR MANY YEARS, ARCHEOLOGISTS HAVE EXPLORED THE SOUTHWEST IN EFFORTS TO FIND TRACES OF VANISHED VILLAGES. DR. MARTIN PEALE, AN AVID STUDENT OF THE PAST, HAS PENETRATED INTO THE DEPTHS OF A CAVE IN THE ARIZONA DESERT. THERE, HIS SEARCH IS REWARDED BY THE DISCOVERY OF A FANTASTIC CARVING MADE UNTOLD AGES AGO. HIS CRY OF TRIUMPH WAS ECHOED BY A SILENT WARNING PROTEST WHICH, IF HUMAN EARS COULD HAVE HEARD IT, WOULD HAVE CRIED OUT IN BITTER OUTRAGE ...

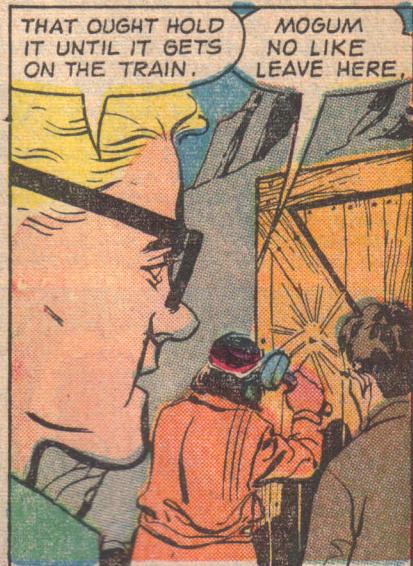
"DON'T BOX ME IN"



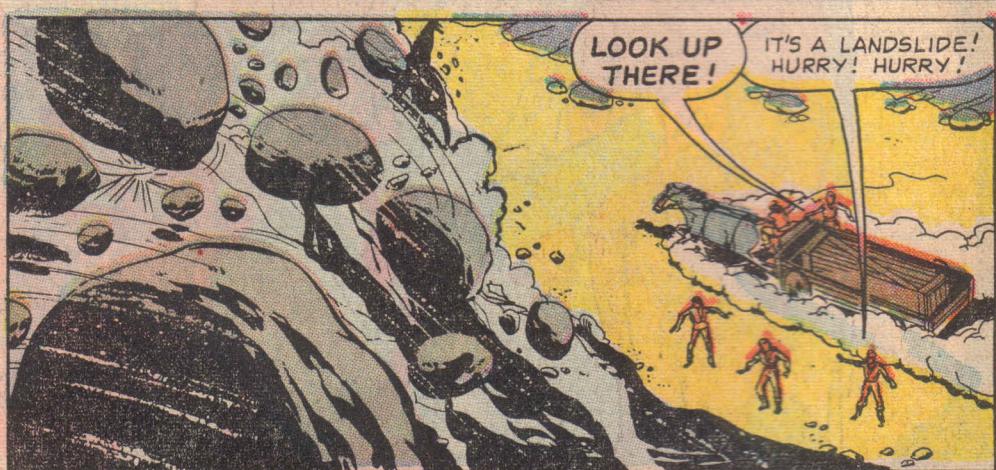
THAT NIGHT, A STRANGE NOISE BROUGHT DR. PEALE AWAKE WITH A START...

THE EXPLORER AND MEN OF HIS CREW RUSHED FROM THEIR TENTS TO WHERE THEY HAD LEFT THE STATUE SECURELY CRATED...

CALLING THE LABORERS, THEY HAVE THE BOX NAILED UP AGAIN...



WHEN DAY DAWNS, THEY BREAK CAMP AND AS THEY ARE ABOUT TO LEAVE, THE LOOMING CLIFF OVER-HEAD SEEMS TO TREMBLE OMINOUSLY, A MENACE FROUGHT WITH IMMINENT DANGER...



THE EXPEDITION BARELY ESCAPES AS THOUSANDS OF TONS OF EARTH THUNDER DOWN ON THE SPOT THEY SO RECENTLY OCCUPIED...

THE FOREMAN OF THE INDIAN WORKERS SPEAKS UP...

AFTER AN ARDUOUS JOURNEY TO THE RAIL LINE, THE CRATED FIGURE IS PUT INTO A BAGGAGE CAR...



ON THE SAME TRAIN, DR. PEALE SERENELY GOES TO SLEEP IN HIS BERTH, CONFIDENT OF THE GLORY AWAITING HIS ACHIEVEMENT. MANY MILES FURTHER ON, IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT, HE AWAKES, HIS SENSES STARTLED BY A FEELING THAT ALL IS NOT WELL...

SOMETHING'S WRONG! WHAT'S THAT--THAT SHADOW? IT'S SHAPED JUST LIKE MY PRE-HISTORIC IMAGE!



THE APPARITION SUDDENLY DISAPPEARS AND DR. PEALE GATHERS HIS WITS, PULLS ON A ROBE AND RUNS THROUGH THE TRAIN TO THE BAGGAGE CAR...

I MUST HAVE BEEN DREAMING... THAT STATUE IS SECURELY CRATED IN THE CAR UP AHEAD.



MEANWHILE, BACK IN THE SOUTHWEST, THE INDIAN VILLAGES ARE SUFFERING FROM AN ACUTE DROUGHT... THE PEOPLE ARE STARVING...

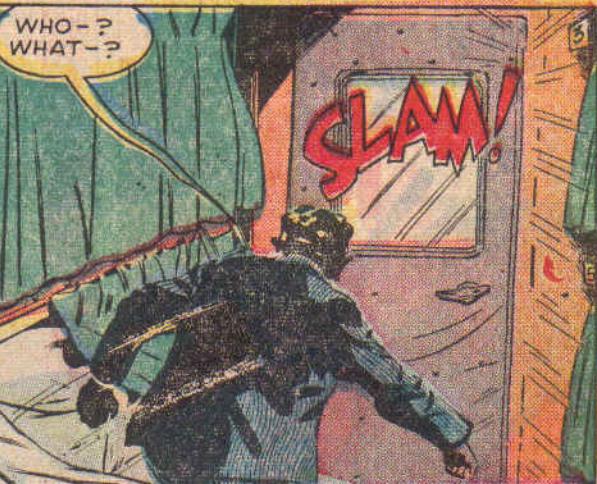
YI-EEE-EE! WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO US? WE WILL ALL STARVE!



THIS IS THE WORST DISASTER WITHIN THE MEMORY OF OUR TRIBE.

LISTEN, MY BROTHERS-- THIS IS NO WHIM OF NATURE. THE GOD OF OUR FATHERS, GREAT MOGUM, IS ANGRY BECAUSE HIS ANCIENT IMAGE HAS BEEN STOLEN FROM ITS RIGHTFUL PLACE.

AS THE EXPLORER LEAPS INTO THE CAR AISLE, THE INTRUDER, WHOEVER IT WAS, BEATS A HASTY RETREAT BEFORE HE CAN SEE ANYTHING...



IN THE BAGGAGE CAR, DR. PEALE IS IN FOR A SURPRISE...

IT--IT'S OUT OF ITS CRATE!



YEAH, MUST HAVE COME LOOSE WHEN I WASN'T LOOKING.

ONCE I NAIL THIS CRATE UP AGAIN, I'M GOING TO STAY RIGHT HERE AND WATCH IT FOR THE REST OF THE TRIP.



A WEEK LATER, DR. PEALE REACHES HOME AND IS GREETED BY HIS WIFE...

MARTIN, AREN'T YOU GOING TO SEND THAT-- THAT THING TO A MUSEUM?

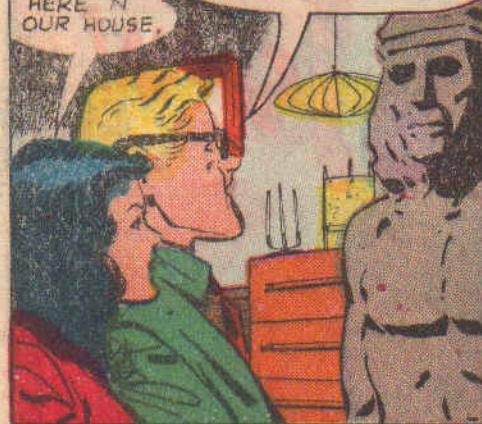
NO--I'M GOING TO SET IT UP RIGHT HERE IN OUR HOUSE. MY COLEAGUES SCOFFED AT MY THEORIES, NOW THEY WILL HAVE TO COME HERE TO SEE THIS.



THE IMAGE IS SET UP IN THE LIVING ROOM OF THE EXPLORER'S HOME...

MARTIN, I DON'T LIKE THAT THING HERE IN OUR HOUSE.

OH, YOU'LL GET USED TO IT, MY DEAR. THIS IS A PRICELESS ANTIQUITY.



SOON, DISTINGUISHED SCIENTISTS OF ARCHEOLOGY FLOCK TO PEALE'S HOME TO SEE THE TREASURE...

YES, THIS IS UNDOUBTEDLY PREHISTORIC. YOU HAVE MADE A SPECTACULAR DISCOVERY.

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM WILL BID HIGH FOR THIS.

I DO NOT INTEND TO PART WITH IT. THIS IS THE CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT OF MY CAREER.



BUT LATE THAT NIGHT, AN UNHOLY RACKET BREAKS LOOSE IN THE EXPLORER'S HOUSE...



WHAT'S THAT? -- THOSE NOISES DOWNSTAIRS --?



I MUST! I'LL BET SOMEBODY IS TRYING TO STEAL MY PREHISTORIC IMAGE ... THOSE JEALOUS FELLOWS!



IN HIS LIVING ROOM, DR. PEALE STANDS AGHAST BEFORE THE VACANT SPOT WHERE HE HAD SET UP HIS PRIZED STATUE FOR EXHIBITION...



JUST THEN, A TERRIFIED SCREAM SHRILLED FROM THE FLOOR ABOVE ...



I WONDER WHAT COULD HAVE FRIGHTENED HER SO -- I'LL SOON FIND OUT.



ONCE UPSTAIRS, HE FINDS HIS WIFE POINTING EXCITEDLY OUT OF THE WINDOW...

LOOK -- IT'S THAT THING -- THAT FIGURE OF YOURS!



UNBELIEVING, YET IMPELLED TO SEE THE EVENTS THROUGH, THEY DESCEND AND FOLLOW THE FUGITIVE ACROSS THE WIDE SUBURBAN LAWNS...

HURRY! WE MUSTN'T LOSE SIGHT OF IT. I'M RESPONSIBLE FOR ANYTHING THAT MAY HAPPEN.



THE CHASE LEADS ACROSS A WIDE STREET QUIET NOW IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT, EXCEPT FOR AN APPROACHING AUTOMOBILE...

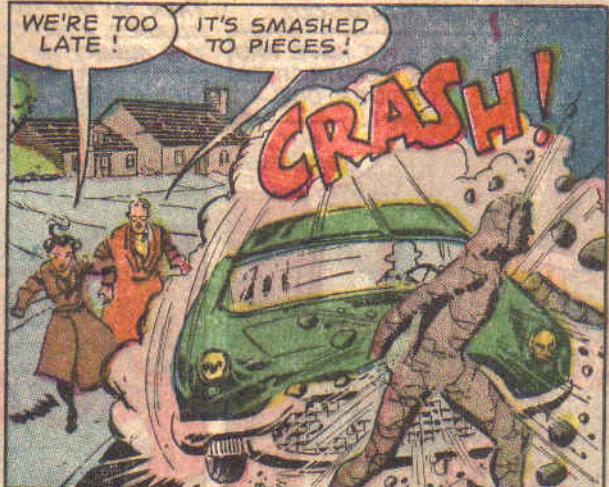
IT'S GAINING ON US. WE'LL NEVER CATCH UP!

LOOK AT THAT CAR! IT'S GOING TO -- !!



THE 20TH CENTURY COLLIDES WITH ANTIQUITY AS THE FLEEING FIGURE RUNS INTO THE PATH OF THE ONCOMING VEHICLE. THERE IS A CRASH, AND...

WE'RE TOO LATE! IT'S SMASHED TO PIECES!



THE DRIVER CLIMBS OUT AS PEALE AND HIS WIFE RUN BREATHLESSLY TO THE SPOT OF THE ENCOUNTER.

ANYBODY HURT? IT WASN'T MY FAULT --

NOBODY HURT, I'M GLAD TO SAY

THIS STUFF OF MINE IS BROKEN, BUT YOU'RE NOT TO BLAME. DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.



DR. PEALE GATHERS UP, FORLORNLY, THE PIECES OF THE ANCIENT CARVING...

MARTIN! YOU'RE NOT GOING TO SET THAT THING UP IN OUR HOUSE AGAIN, ARE YOU?

NO, MY DEAR. I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS TOO.



DR. PEALE DEPOSITS THE
BROKEN PIECES IN A
BIN IN HIS CELLAR...

I'LL CAREFULLY RECON-
STRUCT THIS FIGURE AND
LET IT GO TO WHATEVER
MUSEUM BIDS HIGHEST
FOR IT.

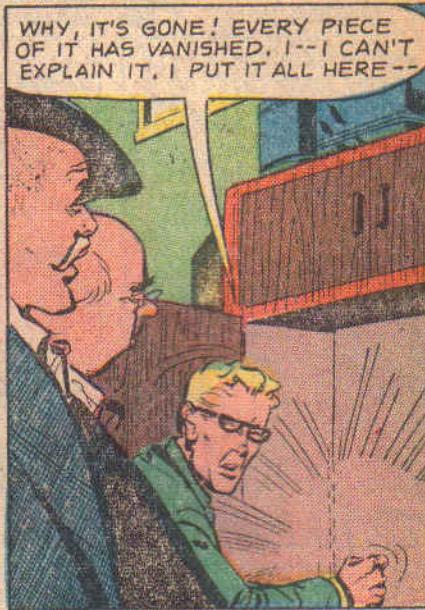
THE NEXT DAY...

WE HEARD YOU ARE WILLING TO
LET US HAVE THE PREHISTORIC
IMAGE, DOCTOR. YOU SAY IT IS
BROKEN, BUT WE'D
LIKE TO SEE WHAT
CONDITION IT'S IN
AT PRESENT.

ALL RIGHT,
GENTLEMEN.
IT'S IN A BIN
DOWNSTAIRS.
COME - I'LL
SHOW YOU.

BUT WHEN HE OPENS THE BIN...

WHY, IT'S GONE! EVERY PIECE
OF IT HAS VANISHED. I-- I CAN'T
EXPLAIN IT. I PUT IT ALL HERE--



THE OFFICIALS STALK OUT...

IS THIS A JOKE? WE HAVE HAD
ENOUGH OF YOUR ECCENTRICITIES,
DR. PEALE. CONSIDER OUR
OFFER WITHDRAWN!

BUT,
GENTLEMEN -



THEN, IN THE FARAWAY INDIAN
VILLAGES, A MERCIFUL RAIN ENDS
THE MISERY OF THE INHABITANTS.

THE GREAT
MOGUM NOW
SEND RAIN!

MOGUM NO LONGER
ANGRY. HE ALL
HAPPY AGAIN.



AND DEEP IN THE CAVE
HIDDEN FROM HUMAN EYES BY
THE LANDSLIDE, THE ANCIENT
STATUE HAS MYSTERIOUSLY
FOUND ITS WAY HOME AGAIN,
TO STAND IN LONELY VIGIL,
WATCHING THE CENTURIES
ROLL SILENTLY PAST...



Best in Comics!
LOOK FOR THIS SEAL

